COLLABIT
COLLABORATION · THE FUTURE OF ICT

Having worked in IT transformation programs in large businesses in Australia, the UK and the US, Melanie Kontze came to realise there was an opportunity to develop a different way to work with clients on transformational change. A way that would collaborate more effectively, that would engage stakeholders for the long haul, would accelerate change and deliver results more rapidly. Silverstone Edge was created, with collaboration at its centre, to co-create and co-design innovative transformation change programs that would enable sustainable change.

Getting Started

For many years, technology transformation programs have focused on the technology implementation, with the business benefits and business transformation forgotten in the pressure to deliver the technology. With reduced budgets, pressure on staffing and increasing customer expectations, this is no longer acceptable. Our approach from the beginning, was to build the business narrative for the transformation. We started collaborating with a visual design firm, who would work with us to translate the output from collaboration labs and program documentation into highly engaging visuals. We found that the visual approach not only built the narrative, it enriched it with nuance and texture that spoke to the needs and wants of people.

The Collaborative Approach

Our engagements tend to be medium-sized engagements, so they are weeks and months long, rather than days long. We work with clients to clarify and visualise program outcomes and to create the business change program, often associated with digital transformation, technology implementations or a new strategic direction.

Collaboration is the way we do this. We like to use collaboration labs and design workshops to co-create and co-design. This approach engages stakeholders at both a head and a heart level. They come into the lab, not as the senior person on the organisation chart, but as the person who is expert in their role at their

level. We work with participants up, down and across the organisation. We use service design thinking and agile approaches to arrive at an answer that everybody understands and that everybody buys in to.

Often we will use a graphic recording artist during the collaboration lab. People can see the visual evolving, it incorporates the actual words that are said, it crystallises the key themes or issues. We then work with the designers to create a visual story board, a narrative that can turn quite complex information into visuals to build a narrative of the change and the strategic implementation.

Collaborating with Others

We collaborate with a number of businesses for the live sketching and visual design both in Canberra and Melbourne. We like to work with people over a period of time and not just one off engagements. On one project we worked with our visual designer for over a year, producing multiple visuals for various stages of the Program.

We collaborate to complement the skills in our business. There are capabilities that we need, at any point in time, that are better grown and developed externally. By thinking through that, before we have an immediate need, we create a collaboration ecosystem that is always there. This brings freshness and new ideas. The different perspective is really important. There's obviously a commercial angle in working with others there is also the advantage of working with another peer group and especially one which has the

same goals and culture. It's very enriching and quite rewarding.

Identifying Collaborators

As with any kind of partner, there's a bit of a process that we go through. We identify those organisations usually through referrals. We then have a series of meetings which are designed to help our understanding of their capabilities and most importantly, how they're operating, their culture. If it is a good fit, we typically start on a smaller project and see how the collaboration pans out.

Often we will run a Collaboration Lab to help build the working relationship and understand ways of working and expectations. It is a great space to help flesh out how people work, what their values are, what's important to them and what's important for how we work together. So, we use some of the same collaboration techniques that we use with our clients to build partnerships and understanding. That's because partnerships are about understanding how you want to work together and what's important for each party. Client relationships are always precious and can be tricky in collaborations, which is where having a foundation of trust, and having very clear boundaries, is important.

A Strategic Collaboration View

Right up front, we took a fairly strategic view on partners and collaboration. We decided that there were a couple of areas that we wanted to find partners in and we have actively gone to find partners in those areas. For example, as a new business seeking access to the government market, we wanted some relationships where we could gain access. We collaborate with SME Gateway which assists Canberra-based business by providing access for businesses like ours into government contracts.

Taking our strategic approach further, and refining it, we are becoming even more specific about what we want in the visualisation space. Furthermore, we are looking at more technology-based software development partners that we can work with. Again, we are looking for fewer rather than many and we are wanting to build something with those people over a period of time. Of course, it's always more powerful when you've got a specific customer that you can get started working on because the need is pressing.

CollabIT's Role

I am actively involved in CollabIT, I regularly attend the breakfasts and through the network have worked on a number of projects.

It's always a balancing act, when you are in a smaller business, between delivering the work and thinking about where to next, and who should I be talking to. CollabIT provides a very concentrated ability to understand what other organisations are doing and where the opportunities might be. Without this concentrated environment, it would take weeks or months to actually make these connections.

CollabIT also offers great advice. You can ring Rob, the Program Manager, and say "I am interested in working in this space. Is there anybody in the network that you could put me in touch with?" And it's free! It's an amazing resource for the Canberra ICT community.

Why Collaboration Is Great

I have worked for many years with lots of different types of people and I love that bringing together of different ideas, perspectives and backgrounds. We are living in a very changing world and while I have a lot of experience, I haven't got all the answers. I find it incredibly enriching to work with people of different ages, different backgrounds, different experiences and just people who simply look at the same thing and have got a completely different take on it. I love it.

⊕ COLLABIT

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CollabIT is an engagement and business development initiative that links small and medium sized companies (SMEs) with multinational corporations and other stakeholders in the ICT sector.

The program is designed to assist companies to establish partnerships with other SME companies, to forge alliances with Multinational Corporations (MNCs), and to build reputation with government CIOs. This enables them to tap into substantial MNC business opportunities and in doing so, access new or locked markets.

CollabIT is a joint initiative of the ACT Government and the Australian Information Industry Association (AIIA) and is delivered under contract by the AIIA.

The CollabIT program is based on the principle that collaboration between SMEs and MNCs enhances the capability and accelerates the business growth of SMEs; and also positively contributes to the success of the MNC.

If you would like to learn more about the CollabIT program please contact

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COLLABIT CONNECT

CollabIT Connect is a newly developed portal that will Connect you to new business partnerships.

If you are looking to partner with a new business, use the search facilities to locate companies who align with your business practices.

You can use Connect to showcase your company and what you do, to reach hundreds of new business contacts.

Register your company details at
www.collabitact.com.au

Want To Connect Or Collaborate With The Subject Of This Story?

SILVERSTONE EDGE

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Silverstone Edge: translating human capital and technology capability into business benefits.

Silverstone Edge combines the disciplines of large-scale program management with behavioural sciences and design thinking to accelerate transformation on large and small business critical projects. Using industry leading visualisation techniques and creative frameworks, we rapidly transfer our experience, knowledge and capability to facilitate transformational change in your organisation.